

Message Text

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SUBJECT: NEW BORDER AGREEMENTS WITH MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA:

ANOTHER SHOT BY PHILIPPINES IN PSYCHOLOGICAL WAR WITH MNLF

REF: (A) JAKARTA 9588; (B) MANILA 10985

1. SUMMARY: MANILA PRESS HAS BEEN HAILING RESULTS OF VISIT BY PHILIPPINE ARMED FORCES SOUTHERN COMMAND COMMANDER TO INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA. VISIT PRODUCED AN AGREEMENT WITH INDONESIA TO ALLOW PHILIPPINE AND INDONESIAN MILITARY RIGHT OF HOT PURSUIT AND ASSURANCE FROM MALAYSIA THAT SABAH IS NOT BEING USED BY MNLF (REFTELS). DESPITE EXAGGERATED PRESS RHETORIC, RESULTS OF TRIP MODEST. PRESS REPORTS, DESIGNED TO PRODUCE FEELING OF ISOLATION ON PART OF MNLF, ARE PART OF GOP'S PSYCHOLOGICAL WAR EFFORT. END SUMMARY.

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2. MANILA GUIDED PRESS HAS BEEN TOUTING IMPORTANCE OF RECENT PHILIPPINE AGREEMENTS WITH MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA (REFTELS) DESIGNED TO LIMIT ABILITY OF MNLF TO USE TWO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES AS SANCTUARIES FROM PHILIPPINE ARMED FORCES AND AS SUPPLY BASES. AGREEMENTS WERE REACHED BY PHILIPPINE ARMED FORCES SOUTHERN COMMAND (SOUTHCOM) COMMANDER REAR ADMIRAL ESPALDON DURING MID-JULY TRIP TO MALAYSIA AND

INDONESIA AND ANNOUNCED ON HIS RETURN TO SOUTHCOM HEADQUARTERS IN ZOMBOANGA JULY 16. ACCORDING TO PRESS, INDONESIAN AGREEMENT ALLOWS PHILIPPINE AND INDONESIAN FORCES TO ENTER EACH OTHER'S COUNTRIES IN "HOT PURSUIT" OF AN ENEMY AND WAS REACHED AT BALI MEETING JULY 11-12. IN MEETING WITH MALAYSIAN MILITARY COMMANDER FOR SABAH AND SARAWAK, PRESS REPORTED ESPALDON WAS ASSURED THAT MALAYSIAN FORCES WERE "DENYING USE OF EASTERN MALAYSIA" TO MNLF AS TRAINING AREA AND TOLD THAT MALAYSIANS HAVE ORGANIZED A SYSTEM OF COAST WATCHERS TO HALT UNAUTHORIZED MOVEMENT TO AND FROM SABAH AND THE PHILIPPINES (REF A).

3. IN SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS WITH EMBOFF, MALAYSIAN EMBASSY COUNSELOR AND INDONESIAN POLITICAL COUNSELOR EMPHASIZED LIMITED NATURE OF AGREEMENT WITH THEIR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES. MALAYSIAN UNDERLINED FACT THAT NO FORMAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN HIS COUNTRY AND PHILIPPINES REACHED DESPITE PRESS REPORTS TO THE CONTRARY. INDONESIAN NOTED NEW AGREEMENT IS NOT A RADICAL DEPARTURE FROM PAST. HE STATED THAT INDONESIA AND THE PHILIPPINES HAVE NOT YET DETERMINED THEIR EXACT BORDER AND THEREFORE THEY HAVE BEEN COOPERATING FOR SOME TIME IN PATROLLING THE GENERAL OCEAN AREA WHERE THE BORDER LIES. THE NEW AGREEMENT MERELY EASES THE FORMAL PROCEDURES FOR MILITARY PATROLS TO CROSS THE BORDER. HE NOTED THAT THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT COMPLAINED ABOUT MNLF USE OF INDONESIAN TERRITORY FOR SOME TIME.
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4. COMMENT: PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO BE MILKING AS MUCH PUBLICITY AS POSSIBLE OUT OF THESE TWO RELATIVELY MODEST AGREEMENTS TO INDUCE A FEELING OF ISOLATION AMONG MNLF CADRES AS PART OF THE GOP'S PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE EFFORT. EVEN IF THE MNLF WERE USING INDONESIAN AND MALAYSIAN TERRITORY AS TRAINING AND SUPPLY CASES, WHICH BOTH GOVERNMENTS ADAMANTLY DENY, IT IS QUESTIONABLE WHETHER THESE TWO AGREEMENTS WOULD CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO STOPPING THE TRAFFIC BETWEEN THE PHILIPPINES AND MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA. THE BORDERS OF ALL THREE COUNTRIES ARE HONEYCOMBED WITH INLETS AND ISLANDS FROM WHICH THE MNLF COULD OPERATE AND IT WOULD TAKE NAVAL RESOURCES BEYOND THE CAPACITY OF ALL THREE COUNTRIES COMBINED TO PATROL ADEQUATELY THESE AREAS.
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